United Nations A/C.5/61/SR.11

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 26 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Yousfi ..... (Algeria)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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Agenda item 125: United Nations common system (*continued*)

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06-58757 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 125: United Nations common system (*continued*) (A/60/723; A/61/30, A/61/381 and A/61/484)

1. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, underscored the pivotal role played by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in advising Member States on ways and means of providing the Organization's staff, its most valuable asset, with the best possible conditions of service. She welcomed the improvements made to the report of the Commission (A/61/30), including the very useful inclusion of a summary of previous recommendations made to the General Assembly. Further deliberations were required on pay and benefits to enable the Committee to take decisions. Modernization and simplification of the system of allowances in the name of greater efficiency must be undertaken in a transparent and equitable manner.

2. Turning to other issues raised by the Commission, she stressed the importance of the education grant, and welcomed the Commission's recommendation for an increase in the level of the grant. The Group of 77 and China was also willing to consider the proposed adjustment to the salary scale. As for conditions of service, in particular for Field Service staff, the subject must be considered in the context of human resources management reform, with a view to ensuring that United Nations staff enjoyed the best possible working conditions. Finally, she expressed great concern at the lack of progress towards achieving gender balance in the Organization, especially at senior levels. The Group of 77 and China supported the recommendations of the Commission aimed at improving the representation of women, in particular women from developing countries.

3. **Ms. Soni** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, underscored the important role of the International Civil Service Commission and the direct connection between its work and the effective functioning of the organizations of the common system. While appreciating the review by the Commission of each benefit and allowance, she wondered how that process contributed to a modern, competitive and streamlined compensation package. Although the United States federal civil service served as a comparator for salaries, there was no comparator for benefits. There was therefore a risk of a cherry-picking approach in which the most attractive model for each benefit was selected; the issue warranted further exploration.

4. She welcomed the decision of the Commission to establish the Working Group on Entitlements of Internationally Recruited Staff Serving in Non-Family Duty Stations and to maintain, as an interim measure, current contractual arrangements in peacekeeping; a common system approach to that issue was overdue. It would be especially important for the Working Group to design a transparent and easily administered compensation package, which was supposed to have been the case for the 300-series appointments used extensively for peacekeeping. The Commission's work in that regard would be an integral part of the General Assembly's efforts to reform human resources management.

5. She expressed disappointment at the insufficient progress in increasing the representation of women in the Professional and higher categories. The Commission and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) should continue to review the situation and make practical recommendations to the General Assembly. Finally, the Fifth Committee should consider the recommendations of the Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service relating to qualifications, tenure and the selection process for ICSC in the context of human resources management reform. The Group of 77 and China had made substantive recommendations in that regard at the two previous sessions of the General Assembly and looked forward to finalizing discussions on the matter.

6. **Mr. Shen** Yanjie (China) welcomed the decision by the International Civil Service Commission to establish a working group on the need to harmonize entitlements and benefits across the common system. The working group should take into account such factors as the budgetary implications of reforms, cost-effectiveness, overall continuity and compatibility of reform measures, the legitimate interests of staff members, transparent and fair implementation, and effective judicial relief mechanisms to safeguard the rights and interests of staff. The Commission should also undertake a comprehensive review of the impact on the common system of such proposals as the streamlining of contracts, the establishment of a

standing professional peacekeeping force and staff mobility schemes.

7. With regard to the proposal to create three types of contracts, temporary, fixed-term and continuing, contractual reform must be aimed at improving performance, maintaining the dynamics of the workforce and meeting the operational needs of the Organization. Renewal of continuing appointments must be performance-based in order to prevent them from becoming de facto permanent contracts. The practice of automatic conversion to continuing appointments after a single appraisal was tantamount to re-introducing permanent appointments; continuing appointments should only be granted pursuant to a transparent procedure based on regularly mandated performance reviews and clear criteria.

8. Decisions on membership in the Senior Management Network were currently the prerogative of chief executives. In order to avoid subjectivity in the selection process, membership decisions should be based on clearly defined criteria and the principles of geographical and gender balance. Managerial tools must be developed to support system-wide leadership capacity-building, although those efforts should be carried out within existing resources.

9. The International Civil Service Commission, as an independent expert organ of the General Assembly, played a pivotal role in regulating conditions of service across the common system. As the Organization worked to improve its human resources management system, the Commission should continue to strengthen the common system by reinforcing its communication and coordination with the chief executives of all member agencies.

10. **Mr. Torrington** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the principles of the international civil service provided a framework that ensured its integrity. He reaffirmed the importance of the common system and the need to preserve the independence and expertise of the International Civil Service Commission in regulating conditions of service in the common system.

11. Turning to the report of the Commission (A/61/30), he welcomed the inclusion of a summary of the Commission's recommendations for 2005-2006; similar summaries should be provided in future reports. The Rio Group would engage constructively with regard to proposals relating to the system of allowances, and he stressed the need to follow up on the issues of contractual arrangements and harmonization of conditions of service in the context of the reform of human resources management and to include the Commission and staff representatives in related discussions.

12. The methodology for determining education grants should be reviewed in order to ensure fair treatment for all staff members. He expressed support for reaffirmation of the Noblemaire principle by the General Assembly as a factor in ensuring that the Organization attracted outstanding staff.

13. **Mr. Muhith** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation stressed the importance of the common system and the ICSC mandate to regulate and coordinate conditions of service while maintaining high standards in the international civil service.

14. He welcomed the progress made with the pilot study of broad banding/pay-for-performance — it was important to strengthen performance-based human resources management. The Commission was right to point to career management as a key to staff acceptance of the project. The participation of more organizations was welcome, but the criteria set for the study by ICSC must be adhered to. The annual updates should indicate whether the goals were being achieved and the impact of the new human resources structures on those goals.

15. The margin had been below the desirable midpoint over the past few years but had increased by 2.9 per cent since 2005 to 114; it must be remembered that the midpoint was desirable rather than mandatory. The matter should be discussed further once the findings of the grade equivalency studies were available.

16. Bangladesh welcomed the ICSC recommendations on hazard pay and commended the commitment of staff working in dangerous locations. He shared the Commission's disappointment at the progress made with regard to the representation of women in the common system. The establishment of focal points for gender issues was an example which all the organizations should follow. While the ICSC recommendations were welcome, an element of managerial accountability for the achievement of gender goals should be introduced.

17. His delegation understood the reasons for the proposed review of dependants' allowances, but the establishment of a better methodology would require comprehensive examination of the issue. The proposals to increase the base/floor salary scale on a no-loss/no-gain basis and to introduce new mobility and hardship arrangements deserved serious consideration. There was a need for reform of the Field Service category: the ICSC recommendations had merit, and the issue should be addressed in the context of reform of the human resources management system.

18. **Mr. Bandar** (Iraq) said that the very important recommendations made by the Commission required consistent follow-up after careful analysis of the issues in question. It was vital to improve gender balance in the common system, especially by recruiting women from underrepresented developing countries, subject to compliance with established criteria.

19. **Mr. Kovalenko** (Russian Federation) said that the new arrangements for the mobility and hardship allowance should be introduced from 1 January 2007, but the desirability of conducting the first review in 2008 should be examined in informal consultations. His delegation took note of the Commission's comments on the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin and its decision to withdraw its earlier recommendation that separate approaches should be maintained for the United Nations and for its funds and programmes with respect to staff serving at non-family duty stations. Further information on the reason for the change of position would be welcome.

20. Before the General Assembly took a decision on the introduction of a new salary system the Commission must demonstrate clearly that the system would improve the performance of the Secretariat and would be more effective than the existing arrangements. Further information would again be welcome.

21. The Commission should certainly continue to monitor the evolution of the Senior Management Network and alert Member States to any possibility of the creation of a separate category of personnel or a closed club of senior managers with special rights.

22. His delegation reaffirmed its belief that the Commission should be strengthened as the central system-wide organ for the regulation of salaries and conditions of service and it would be guided by that belief during the Committee's consideration of the recommendations of the Panel on the Strengthening of the International Civil Service, as well as by the belief that Member States should have a key role in the appointment of the members of the Commission and that the tripartite consultation process should be retained. It could not understand the connection made by some delegations between agreement in the Committee on the Panel's recommendations and the adoption of a resolution on the overall system of salaries and allowances. That approach had prevented the conclusion of the Committee's discussion of the matter at the sixtieth session; there must be no repetition of such a situation.

23. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that the statement by the representative of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations was useful, for it was important for the Committee to hear the views of the staff; a statement by the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System would have been welcome.

24. Her delegation would like to know whether any of the larger organizations, in particular the United Nations Secretariat, had volunteered to participate in the pilot study on broad banding/pay-for-performance, and would welcome further information about the job-differentiation process. Given the topicality of the issue, the Commission might provide a further update on the status of the review of contractual arrangements for staff serving in the field. Nigeria echoed the concern expressed by the Commission on the slowness of progress towards the attainment of gender balance, especially with regard to the recruitment of women from African and other developing countries.

25. **Mr. Bel Hadj Amor** (Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission) said that all the matters raised in the Committee would be given serious consideration by ICSC, which was aware of its key role in the reform of the United Nations system, in particular where human resources management was concerned. The Committee had a difficult task in taking decisions on the many issues falling under the agenda item but would surely complete that task successfully.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/61/SR.12

General Assembly
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27 November 2006

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Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 30 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Yousfi ..... (Algeria)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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Agenda item 123: Human resources management (*continued*)

Agenda item 133: Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (*continued*)

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06-59107 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 123: Human resources management
(A/61/201, A/61/228, A/61/255 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, A/61/257 and Add.1-3, A/61/274, A/61/319 and A/61/537)

1. **The Secretary-General**, introducing his report entitled "Investing in people" (A/61/255 and Add.1 and Corr.1), said that during his career he had been deeply involved with human resources issues, and they were therefore close to his heart. It was often said that the staff of the United Nations were its greatest asset, but the Organization did not invest in them or support them properly. The staff of the Organization were nationals of its Member States, working hand in hand with, and for, their citizens, and represented 80 per cent of its resources. They made their remarkable skills available to the world, were infused with the ideals of public service and were proud to live and breathe the global mission of the United Nations.

2. However, at present many of those men and women were prevented from doing their best by policies and processes that had not kept pace with the evolving needs of a changing world. In his capacity as Secretary-General, he had sought to address that problem from the outset, and the measures set out in the report were informed by both his deep belief in the commitment of the staff and his own experiences of the thicket of rules and regulations and the morass of systems and structures that so frequently hobbled their responses.

3. The latest package of measures built on a decade of work and lessons learned. During his tenure a new human resources framework had been launched, and managers had been granted new authority to select and develop staff. Rules and procedures had been streamlined, and the Organization's ability to staff peacekeeping operations had been strengthened. In addition, arrangements for staff security had been overhauled and efforts had been made to break down the institutional walls that hindered staff mobility and development. Consequently, the Organization was more effective and efficient than it had been a decade previously and, in terms of cost-effectiveness, it rivalled or surpassed other organizations engaged in similar activities. He thanked Member States for their support through successive rounds of reform, without which such progress would not have been possible.

4. Delegations might be wondering why he had submitted a second set of human resources management reform proposals so close to the end of his term. In truth, while things were moving in the right direction, significant obstacles remained. The Organization's mandates continued to grow in number and complexity but recruitment practices were reactive and slow, and the targets for gender balance and geographical diversity had not been reached. Current practices and arrangements could only benefit so much from further adjustments.

5. Member States themselves had recognized those shortcomings. At the 2005 World Summit, Heads of State and Government had asked what a Secretary-General needed to fulfil his or her managerial responsibilities and how the Organization could develop the right policies, regulations and rules, especially in the area of human resources. The report entitled "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide" (A/60/692 and Corr.1), in which he had articulated a vision of a United Nations civil service known for its excellence and agility, had been his initial response to those requests, and the report now before the Committee set out detailed measures for the realization of that vision.

6. Even as recently as 15 years previously, the United Nations had consisted of a stable, mostly static and Headquarters-based Secretariat, whose main function was to set norms and service conferences and meetings. While that vital aspect of its work would always be a part of its core identity, in recent years the Organization had become much more multidimensional. More than half its 30,000 staff now served in the field, the majority in peacekeeping, but also engaged in tsunami relief, criminal justice investigations, electoral assistance and post-conflict assessment of environmental damage, but although the budget reflected the dramatic expansion of its activities, the regulations and rules governing its staff did not. Systems were fragmented and excessively complex, making them difficult to understand and administer. As a result, trust was lacking and accountability diffuse. Furthermore, the Organization's antiquated technology was ill suited to managing a global workforce.

7. That situation had given rise to an unacceptably high level of managerial risk. United Nations missions were handicapped by high vacancy rates (from 22 to 26 per cent on average) and destabilizing levels of staff

turnover. In addition, more than 50 per cent of field staff had been with the Organization for two years or less, and it was difficult to apply policies and standards consistently across the board.

8. It was therefore time for a more fundamental cultural change. However, such a change would not be possible without the support of staff and managers alike. Accordingly, extensive consultations had been undertaken with elected staff representatives from all duty stations, except New York, within the framework of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee. Teams of staff members had also visited duty stations away from Headquarters and strong support had been expressed for the proposals contained in the report. It was unfortunate that the New York Staff Union had not joined the consensus and had chosen not to participate in the formal processes. He hoped that it would reconsider its stance and reopen the dialogue with senior management.

9. His proposals took as their starting point the recognition that the Secretariat consisted of a single global workforce, which had to be managed transparently and fairly if the United Nations was to provide the services asked of it and become an employer of choice for the world's best professionals. Change must begin with recruitment, conditions of service and career development, and the proposals at issue covered that entire continuum. Recruitment must be accelerated, with targeted measures designed to identify suitable candidates, and existing contractual arrangements should be replaced by a single type of contract. Even that seemingly modest change would do much to restore equity and improve transparency, mobility and flexibility. Harmonized conditions of service for field staff would help attract and retain high-quality individuals with valuable experience. The establishment of 2,500 career positions in peacekeeping operations would ensure that peacekeeping, as a core function of the Secretariat, would benefit from much needed continuity and expertise. In particular, there would be more rigorous selection procedures and better training for managers and leaders.

10. The proposals set out in the report would bear fruit only if they were supported by sufficient financial resources. To date, training and other efforts to strengthen staff and the structures and systems underpinning their work had suffered from chronic underfunding. The new package was entitled "Investing in people" for a reason: if the Organization invested in its staff now, it would reap greater dividends, and also realize cost savings, later on.

11. Some Member States might hesitate to give the proposals full consideration, because they came on the eve of a new Administration. But the package was based on a careful diagnosis of the current human resources situation. It reflected the views of both staff and managers and was based on his own experiences, which had been both immensely gratifying and frustrating. Anyone else conducting a similarly thorough analysis of human resources at the United Nations would uncover the same problems and seek similar, or the same, solutions. Over the years, Member States had dedicated significant attention and political energy to the question of human resources, and he hoped they would maintain that same level of engagement during the latest round of reforms. He was convinced that the proposals currently on the table were necessary to create an international civil service with the highest standards of performance, ethics and accountability, able to meet evolving challenges. The return on Member States' investment would be a more productive and accountable Organization.

12. **Ms. Beagle** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), introducing the Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform (A/61/228), said that it provided an overview of actions taken further to earlier reform initiatives presented by the Secretary-General and described some of the challenges faced during that process. It also contained additional background information on the proposals contained in document A/61/255 and Add.1 and Corr.1.

13. The report was presented in the same format as previous reports on the same issue and indicated the goals, achievements and future activities under each of the 10 building blocks for the reform of human resources management. It also responded to additional specific requests of the General Assembly set out in resolutions 59/266 and 60/238. She pointed out that one of the 10 building blocks, namely administration of justice, was being pursued by the Redesign Panel on the United Nations system of administration of justice. The Secretary-General would submit the relevant report to the General Assembly at the first part of the resumed session in 2007.

14. The Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/61/257 and Add.1-3) covered the period from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 and provided comprehensive information on the demographic characteristics of the Secretariat. For the first time, the population analysed in the report had been expanded to include all staff, irrespective of source of funding, type of engagement, duration of contract, level or duty station, and covered the 30,000 Secretariat staff serving at headquarters duty stations, regional commissions and field locations. The three addenda to the report dealt with gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities (A/61/257/Add.1), the employment of retired former staff (A/61/257/Add.2), and consultants and individual contractors (A/61/257/Add.3), respectively.

15. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on the Management Performance Board (A/61/319), she recalled that the Board, which was chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General, had been established by the Secretary-General in May 2005 as a means of strengthening the accountability framework for senior managers. It was responsible for monitoring and analysing the manner in which senior managers carried out their activities. The report currently before the Committee summarized the activities of the Board since its establishment, especially in relation to the human resources action plans and the senior management compacts between the Secretary-General and programme managers.

16. The Secretary-General's report on the comprehensive policy guidelines for consultants in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (A/61/201) had been submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/270 and contained information on the new comprehensive policy guidelines for the selection and management of consultants at UNHCR.

17. Human resources management reform must be viewed as a process. Achievements to date had prepared the ground for the Organization to address remaining and emerging challenges, including the alignment of policies and practices with operational needs and global standards and the development of the resources and tools needed to manage change. The proposals contained in document A/61/255 and Add.1 and Corr.1 built on past experience, incorporated lessons learned and were designed to produce the most effective human resources framework possible.

18. In closing, she drew attention to a dilemma concerning the transmission to Member States of the views of the staff. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213, the Assembly was willing to receive and consider fully the views of the staff as set out by a single recognized representative of the staff of the United Nations Secretariat in a document submitted through the Secretary-General. However, in her capacity as the representative of the Secretary-General, she had been asked to transmit two documents, and some staff associations had informed her that they had not endorsed either of those two documents. Consequently, she was unable to comply with the provisions of the resolution. However, if the Committee so wished, she would submit both documents for its consideration.

19. **Ms. Hurtz-Soyka** (Director, a.i., Ethics Office), introducing the Secretary-General's first report on the activities of the Ethics Office (A/61/274), said that it also addressed the request for the expeditious filling of vacancies for the Office, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/283.

20. Since 1 January 2006, the Ethics Office had been establishing administrative and operational procedures while implementing the policies falling under its mandate, as set out in Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/2005/22. It had consulted widely with relevant internal offices, as well as external public and private sector organizations, and had sought to capitalize on the best information and lessons learned.

21. One of the most important functions of the Office was its leading role in developing and setting standards of conduct and facilitating annual training on ethics issues. The activities undertaken to date in that area were set out in paragraphs 15 to 19 of the report. Paragraphs 25 to 30 described the action taken by the Office to provide confidential advice and guidance to both individuals and groups. To date, nearly 200 requests for advice and guidance had been received, over half of them relating to conflicts of interest and other ethics-related questions. The remainder dealt with gifts and hospitality, outside activities, reports of misconduct referred to appropriate offices, and use of the Organization's assets.

22. The financial disclosure programme was another important component of the Secretary-General's mission to maintain and enhance public trust in the integrity of the United Nations. In that connection, the

Ethics Office had coordinated the annual financial disclosure exercise, which covered more than 1,700 staff members and included staff at the D-1 and L-6 levels and above, as well as those with access to confidential procurement or investment information and all staff serving in the Ethics Office. To date, 95 per cent of staff members at Headquarters subject to the financial disclosure programme had filed statements. The compliance rate in peacekeeping missions was currently 69 per cent. The Office had also been actively engaged in contracting the external financial experts responsible for reviewing the financial disclosure statements. That process was in its final stages.

23. In addition, the Ethics Office bore responsibility for protecting staff against retaliation for reporting misconduct. To date, it had received 53 complaints of such retaliation, six of which had had a final determination. Of those six, one case had been submitted for investigation; in the other five cases, no credible evidence of retaliation had been found.

24. The report also contained a number of general observations on the whistle-blower protection policy, ethics advice and financial disclosure. However, a comprehensive review of the Ethics Office would be submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. At that time the Secretary-General would present his views on the possible establishment of a group of internationally representative experts to provide periodic, independent assessment of the Office. Lastly, she recalled that the Ethics Office was currently being operated by staff on assignment. However, the recruitment processes for the four permanent Professional posts were now in their final stages.

25. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/61/537), expressed his appreciation for the Secretary-General's effort to reform human resources management at the United Nations. The report contained in document A/61/255 and Add.1 and Corr.1 set out a number of innovative ideas and, although some of them required further elaboration, their general thrust and direction were welcome.

26. In reviewing the proposals, the Advisory Committee had sought to clarify which of them required a policy decision by the General Assembly, which were within the purview of the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer under Article 97 of the Charter, which should await the results of planned or future studies, and which could be acted upon immediately. In cases where the General Assembly had been requested to take note of further requirements to be included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, the Advisory Committee had advised that the Assembly did not need to pronounce itself on such future requests at present, since it was entirely within the authority of the Secretary-General to include any request he saw fit in the proposed programme budget.

27. The Advisory Committee had once again stressed the relevance of Article 101 of the Charter and welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to ensure that the Office of Human Resources Management assume a more proactive role. It had also reaffirmed the need for clear lines of authority and the requisite accountability and called for the establishment of a clear system of incentives and sanctions.

28. In conclusion, he said that consultation between staff and managers in accordance with the Staff Regulations and relevant General Assembly resolutions was of the utmost importance.

29. **Mr. Kliamov** (President of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations system) recalled that when the Organization had been founded the main role of the Secretariat had been conference servicing. Over time, however, the demands placed on staff had become much more diverse and complex. The Secretariat had responded to those demands in an ad hoc, patchwork manner, but the time had come for a comprehensive reform to make the Secretariat fully functional in the current operating environment.

30. Regarding the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, the Organization required a multifunctional and highly skilled workforce, and he applauded the Secretary-General's undertaking to provide staff with more training opportunities. The additional expenditure required would be justified by the creation of a more mobile and efficient workforce. The recruitment system must likewise be modernized, with an integrated global system for both field operations and Headquarters. There must be greater transparency in both external and internal recruitment, and the recruitment process must promote integrity,

professionalism, efficiency, gender balance and geographical distribution.

31. He welcomed the expanded opportunities for staff development offered by the mobility programme, but urged the Committee to explore all mechanisms for reducing the impact of work/life issues, which impeded mobility and the achievement of other goals, such as gender parity. The concerns of staff with family obligations must be taken into account and the mobility programme should not affect their career development. Greater effort must be devoted to improving living and working conditions at the various duty stations; it was not fair, for example, that staff serving in field missions did not all enjoy the same benefits, compounding the difficult conditions in which they served.

32. Current contractual arrangements varied greatly, often leading to inequities verging on discrimination. While many staff believed that the permanent contract system should be retained for international civil servants, the proposed three-tier system of temporary, fixed-term and continuing contracts was an acceptable compromise to address the existing, dysfunctional system, and should be implemented immediately. Human resources reform must also go hand-in-hand with reform of the internal justice system, as described in the report of the Redesign Panel on the United Nations system of administration of justice (A/61/205).

33. He cautioned against deferring much-needed reform in order to reduce costs. That would be a false economy and would affect the long-term efficiency and effectiveness of the Organization. In order to adapt the Organization to the twenty-first century, the Committee should endorse the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his reports, which took into account the views of staff.

34. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, applauded the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the Organization's human resources framework. The Group fully respected the responsibilities entrusted by the Charter to the Secretary-General as chief administrative officer and supported the oversight role played by the General Assembly; it did not subscribe to the view that the General Assembly was preventing the Secretary-General from performing his role.

35. Effective implementation of the Organization's increasingly complex and difficult mandates hinged on the quality of its staff and the availability of resources. The Group would continue to support measures aimed at ensuring the best possible conditions of service for staff and addressing the concerns of staff in peacekeeping operations in particular. It would also focus on benchmarks for reform aimed at ensuring that staff met the highest standards of ethics, fairness, transparency, accountability, performance, managerial excellence and respect for diversity. He welcomed the progress made in such areas as planning and monitoring, electronic performance management, streamlining of procedures, delegation of staff selection to department heads, mobility, and integration of core competencies and values into human resources systems. Results had, however, been varied, and he looked forward to strengthening the reforms already implemented.

36. The current decentralized recruitment system required review. Recruitment was a managerial responsibility, and managers must be held accountable for appointing staff who did not meet the specified criteria. The central review bodies played an important role in ensuring accountability and transparency in the recruitment process, and, given the concerns raised by staff regarding their role, their terms of reference should be more clearly defined.

37. Other important elements of the recruitment process required careful reflection. The roster of pre-screened candidates must be used in a fair manner to fill field posts expeditiously. The Galaxy system should be improved to help the Organization meet its operational needs. Promotion, currently based on performance, must include safeguards to prevent discrimination and promotion on the basis of personal preference. Better planning and coordination among departments would expedite recruitment. He expressed concern that a reduction in advertising time for vacancies would undermine the ability of candidates from developing countries to fairly compete for vacancies, although the Group would be amenable to discussing ways to facilitate making urgent appointments. It also welcomed the proposal to establish a dedicated recruitment service within the Office of Human Resources Management to assist programme managers in the selection and recruitment of staff.

38. Staff mobility was a useful tool in meeting the demands made on the Organization and should apply to all categories of staff, including the Professional and

higher categories. While mobility should remain voluntary, it must be accompanied with incentives such as opportunity for promotion and hardship allowances. All staff should have an equal opportunity to move to and from Headquarters. Mobility should not be seen as a coercive measure; it should be implemented in consultation with staff associations and phased in without undermining the institutional memory of departments. It should not be used to move posts between departments and staffing tables should remain in tact. Staff should be able to manage their own careers. Training of staff was likewise very important and the Group supported approval of the full amount requested by the Secretary-General for staff development. Training programmes should meet the needs of the Organization, add to the knowledge and skills of staff and be externally certified. All staff should have equal access to training opportunities.

39. The continued failure of the Organization to meet benchmarks in the areas of equitable gender and geographical representation was a source of great concern. Many countries remained unrepresented or underrepresented, and there were few appointments of women candidates from developing countries. Existing measures, such as the special competitive examinations, the use of pre-screened candidates from developing countries and special recruitment missions to unrepresented and underrepresented countries had failed to meet targets. Managers who failed to implement the benchmarks identified in human resources action plans should be held accountable.

40. Some senior management positions seemed to be the exclusive preserve of certain Member States. The vacancies occurring as a result of retirements by 2010 should be used to improve the international character of the Organization. The Management Performance Board must take up the issue. The Group of 77 and China would request the submission to the General Assembly of quarterly updates on progress made.

41. The Group of 77 and China looked forward to further clarification of the proposal to approve a framework of 2,500 career civilian positions in peace operations at the Professional and Field Service levels, including details of the configuration of their occupational groups, post levels, and the impact on geographical and gender criteria. With regard to harmonization of conditions of service, the Group took note of the proposal to offer contracts under one set of staff rules, but believed that no final decision should be taken before considering the report on harmonization of benefits in the field to be prepared by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) Working Group on Entitlements of Internationally Recruited Staff Serving in Non-Family Duty Stations.

42. The current accountability framework within the Organization was fragmented, difficult to comprehend and had not been fully implemented. He expressed concern that clear guidelines to hold programme managers accountable for failures had not been implemented. Concrete measures to improve accountability must be adopted before delegating further authority to programme managers. There was also a need to make the internal justice system more transparent and fairer; he looked forward to the recommendations of the Redesign Panel on the United Nations system of administration of justice.

43. There must be a proper framework for consultation with staff on human resources reform. Mistrust between management and staff was regrettable and harmful to the image of the Organization. Every effort must be made to improve staff-management relations. The Group of 77 and China looked forward to hearing the views of all staff representatives on proposed reforms and paid tribute to staff serving across the world, in particular those who had lost their lives in the service of the Organization.

44. **Ms. Lintonen** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova and Ukraine, expressed gratitude to the Secretary-General for his efforts to promote ongoing reform of the Organization. Significant efforts had been made to adapt what had been a Headquarters-focused human resources management system to the current reality, where more than half of staff were serving in the field.

45. The Secretary-General's vision of the future was of an integrated, field-oriented and operational Organization. The European Union agreed that the Organization required modern human resources management and a culture that enabled all staff to make a maximum contribution. However, much remained to be done. For example, there had been insufficient progress towards gender balance and

geographical distribution; the multiple contractual arrangements were inequitable and difficult to administer; and conditions of service in the field were less favourable than those offered by the funds and programmes.

46. Turning to the Secretary-General's proposals, she said that recruitment should be more proactive and quicker, with a view to reducing recruitment times by half. The European Union looked forward to discussing the establishment of a dedicated recruitment service and other recruitment-related proposals, taking into account the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Recruitment must continue to be on the basis of efficiency, competence and integrity, as enshrined in the Charter, and she reiterated the need to increase gender and geographical balance, in particular at senior levels.

47. The European Union welcomed the success of the managed reassignment programme for P-2 staff and looked forward to continued work on mobility to create a more versatile and multi-skilled international workforce. The programme would prepare new staff for a flexible environment and truly represented an investment in people on the part of the Organization. The European Union also looked favourably on greater investment in staff development and career support; managers must support career development and staff must be committed to continuous professional development. The career development system would help attract and retain staff of the highest quality. Training would also play a crucial role, and managers must be equipped to manage human and financial resources. Better training in key areas of resource management would promote common understanding of rules, procedures and standards and improve risk management. True change in management culture would require investment in both the selection and the development of leaders. The performance of senior managers must be closely monitored.

48. Although it recognized the need to improve human resources technology tools and processes, in particular the new e-staffing tool, the European Union looked forward to the review of the capabilities of the new technologies to be submitted at the current session. She cautioned that new technology was just another tool to assist staff in increasing their skills.

49. The European Union was ready to discuss the streamlining of contractual arrangements in the interest of fairness and consistency in the treatment of staff, and would appreciate more information on the details of the contracts envisaged and the financial implications of the new system. It looked forward to the report of the ICSC Working Group on Entitlements of Internationally Recruited Staff Serving in Non-Family Duty Stations, including proposals for a harmonized approach within the United Nations system. It also looked forward to discussing the proposals of the Secretary-General for reforming the Field Service category. Although there was merit in establishing a framework of 2,500 career civilian positions in peace operations, more detailed information, in particular with regard to recruitment and costs, would be appreciated. She also stressed the need to ensure the highest levels of security for staff at headquarters locations and in the field.

50. The significant number of retirements over the coming years, in particular at the senior management and Director levels, would provide an opportunity to realign the workforce to meet future needs, rejuvenate the Organization and reach gender and geographical targets. The European Union was ready to consider the possibility of a limited voluntary staff buyout and looked forward to receiving more information on past experience in that regard.

51. The European Union shared staff concerns about the need to increase transparency in the human resources system at all levels. Managers must, for example, be held more accountable for their actions. The European Union agreed with ACABQ that there must be clear lines of authority and the requisite accountability. The views of staff on human resources issues, including the Secretary-General's proposals, must also be heard.

52. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Rio Group had always supported the improvement of the conditions of service of the staff, the Organization's most valuable asset. Moreover, since the current world situation and the complexity of the new mandates called for skilled and responsible professionals, the Secretary-General's proposals on human resources management lay at the core of the reform effort. The measures for improvement of the recruitment system must equip the Organization with excellent staff while respecting the diversity and neutrality of the international civil service and the need for equitable geographical representation. The staff mobility policy must facilitate

the work of the Organization: it should be based on clear principles, including non-discriminatory treatment and adequate compensation, and be accepted by all the parties.

53. Where training and managerial leadership were concerned, there must be opportunities for professional growth for personnel at all levels; training was an integral part of career development. The simplification of contractual arrangements and harmonization of conditions of service should be reviewed in the context of the studies being conducted by ICSC. It was also important to improve the system of human resources information technology, and the proposals on staff buyout should be examined in the light of the benefits expected from the measure.

54. **Mr. Adomayakpor** (Togo) said that the outgoing Secretary-General had advised his successor to make full use of the unparalleled resource which he would find in the staff of the Organization. That was good advice, because the positive results achieved by the United Nations since its foundation were due to the skills of its staff, and now more than ever before it needed highly qualified personnel. The Secretary-General's current proposals would help to produce a more dynamic and independent international civil service with an enhanced sense of responsibility.

55. Particular attention should be given in human resources management to periodic renewal of the staff, taking into account the need to transmit institutional memory. Recruitment policy must take account of upcoming retirements in order to avoid posts remaining vacant to the detriment of the Organization's activities. Greater attention should be given to the recruitment of qualified staff from developing countries so that they could play a bigger part in the management of those activities.

56. **Mr. Kapoma** (Zambia) said that his delegation welcomed the new human resources proposals, especially those relating to holding managers responsible for merit-based recruitment and career development, geographical representation, gender balance, and ethical standards, and to the establishment of action-plan focal points in all departments. It acknowledged the efforts made so far by the Management Performance Board, but noted that overall performance continued to fall short of targets in the areas of geographical representation and gender balance.

57. His delegation also noted that notwithstanding the measures to improve the efficiency of the selection of candidates for recruitment, the system remained complex and lacking in transparency: it should be simplified and based on merit, with due account given to geographical considerations. The fast-track concept should be used to fill posts falling vacant through attrition. Heads of department who failed to meet geographical and gender targets should be required to justify the selection of candidates from over-represented countries or of male candidates instead of equally well qualified female ones. Since even that measure might prove insufficient, the Management Performance Board should closely monitor the departments concerned, and measures to deliver accountability and transparency should be explored further.

58. The Secretary-General was to be commended for his efforts to improve staff development and career prospects, but there was a wide gap between training needs and the resources available: training accounted for only 1 per cent of staff costs. The gap must be closed, in part by allocating more resources to the priority areas of staff development. Zambia supported the proposals on gender-mainstreaming programmes for middle management and on the promotion of gender and cross-cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness among General Service staff to address problems of sexual harassment and discrimination.

59. The arguments for long-term contractual arrangements for staff serving in peacekeeping operations had merit; his delegation looked forward to the forthcoming ICSC report on the subject. Personnel from developing countries must have access to such contracts and to equal opportunities for career development in peacekeeping. The unfair conditions of service of married staff members serving at non-family duty stations had brought them untold hardship; again his delegation looked forward to the recommendations of the working group on harmonization of benefits in the field.

60. **Mr. Al-Sebaiel** (Kuwait) said that human resources management was a vital building block for any improvement in the Organization. His delegation supported the reforms initiated over the past eight years and the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's reports. It paid tribute to the staff of the United Nations, especially those serving in high-risk areas. The Secretary-General's new proposals deserved

support, but it must be remembered that reform was a process, not an event. The aim of the administrative and financial reforms should not be to cut costs but to strengthen the Organization's capacity to carry out its mission. Particular attention must be given to equitable geographical distribution and gender balance in recruitment: unrepresented and underrepresented countries must have an opportunity to participate in the work of the United Nations. Equitable geographical representation would enhance its transparency and credibility; in particular, senior-level posts must not be monopolized by a few States to the exclusion of others.

61. **Mr. Thein** (Myanmar) said that his delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's vision of an independent international civil service with the highest standards of performance and accountability, and it agreed with him that the United Nations must communicate the Organization's mission, strengthen its organizational culture and renew its commitment to core values and ethics. In a body such as the United Nations, ethics, fairness and transparency were equally as important as efficiency, and serious attention should be given to those values in the reform work, for without them there could not be a stronger Organization worldwide.

62. **Mr. Wallace** (United States of America) said that the Secretary-General's introduction of the reports in person underscored the importance of the link between human resources management and the work of the Organization. The Secretary-General, who had himself risen through the ranks, had always pressed for reform of human resources management, and the United States was also an ardent supporter of such reform: it was imperative for the Organization's human resources systems to be modernized and streamlined and equipped with the necessary resources.

63. His delegation noted the Advisory Committee's concerns about the financial and administrative implications of the proposal on mobility and its recommendation that the Secretary-General should provide a more complete analysis of the impact of his proposals for new contractual arrangements. As well as awaiting the ICSC recommendations in that regard the Fifth Committee should listen to the views of the staff bodies. Surely all Member States shared the Secretary-General's vision of one global Secretariat with competitive conditions of service; for its part the United States would work to achieve real human resources reform in the most cost-effective manner.

64. **Mr. Hussain** (Pakistan) said that the Secretary-General's reform initiatives and the 2005 World Summit Outcome and its implementation process had all been guided by the need to equip the United Nations to address the new challenges of the twenty-first century. The Organization's performance depended on the quality of its human resources and on the well-being of its personnel, especially staff members working in difficult and perilous conditions. The Secretary-General was to be commended for his commitment to transforming the United Nations into a field-oriented organization. In that connection an independent international civil service with the highest standards of performance, integrity and accountability was essential to effective multilateralism.

65. The human resources machinery had deficiencies in terms of recruitment and selection, strategic planning, underrepresentation of developing countries, mobility incentives, accountability and implementation of General Assembly resolutions, the internal justice system, and information and communication technology (ICT) support. Most of the targets set in the human resources action plans had not been attained, and the Performance Management Board must be given a robust role in holding programme managers to account in that regard.

66. While there was a need for equity and integration, the Secretary-General's proposals required further deliberation. A human resources management system based on fairness, transparency and merit was essential to the recruitment of the best personnel, in which connection there should be a pre-screened roster of candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries. His delegation supported the retention of the present eligibility criteria and welcomed the Secretary-General's outreach plan. However, the proposal on reduction of the advertising time for vacancies would have a negative impact on the recruitment of candidates from developing countries. The suggestion for a dedicated unit to facilitate field-mission recruitment required further clarification, but such a unit might help to improve geographical representation and the monitoring of human resources action plans.

67. While staff mobility was essential to cope with emerging needs and priorities, it must be voluntary and take into account staff members' interests and specific circumstances. Mandatory mobility could have unforeseen implications for the administration and management of the Organization. Emphasizing that

mobility must be applied to all categories of staff without discrimination, his delegation requested reports on the first phase of the mobility exercise for staff in the Professional and General Service categories. Mobility should be used to place staff from developing countries in the key departments in which they had historically been underrepresented.

68. Equitable geographical distribution was not just an obligation under the Charter of the United Nations, it was essential to ensuring that United Nations reports reflected the viewpoints of all regions and civilizations in an equitable manner. The continued underrepresentation of developing countries, and particularly Muslim countries, at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels was disappointing. In addition, there were few women at those levels. The Organization should seek parity between developed and developing countries at the senior management level, making appointments in rotation, and ensuring that an Under-Secretary-General from a developed country was paralleled by an Assistant Secretary-General from a developing country. His delegation would like the Secretariat to submit quarterly reports on progress towards increasing recruitment from developing countries in sensitive areas such as human rights and important fields such as political affairs, peacekeeping, conference management and General Assembly affairs.

69. The Committee must discuss further the Secretary-General's proposal for the creation of 2,500 career positions for civilian peacekeeping staff; logically, significant numbers of such staff should be from troop-contributing countries. His delegation supported a voluntary staff buyout, since a compulsory exercise could be expensive and contravene the applicable rules, and he endorsed the conclusions of the Advisory Committee in that regard. The Committee must also discuss further the harmonization of contracts under the different series of the Staff Rules. As harmonization would be costly and would affect the composition of the Secretariat, his delegation would seek further clarification; the proposals should be considered in parallel with the related report of the International Civil Service Commission. The existing skills and competence of staff should be enhanced by investment in staff development and training.

70. The appointment of consultants and contractors in the Secretariat should be monitored by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the guidelines on the length of employment and the fields of expertise of consultants must be respected, and the unfairness of hiring such individuals from a limited number of States must be addressed. The continued use of current and retired staff as consultants was a matter of concern. A further concern was the failure to act on the requests of the General Assembly for a strong accountability framework, which would improve efficiency, transparency and fairness. The absence of a sound internal system of justice was a particular problem.

71. **Mr. Hassan** (Sudan) said that reform of the Organization could not be considered without making optimum use of the human resources that constituted its backbone. Staff must have suitable conditions of employment and be fulfilled in their jobs. However, as the Secretary-General had indicated, there had been little change in the representation of Member States, particularly where senior management positions were concerned. That was to the detriment of developing countries, which could not fully contribute to the reform effort unless they were equitably represented. Furthermore, although the gender balance at senior levels had improved in general terms, there had been no improvement in favour of developing countries. His delegation hoped that the measures proposed by the Secretary-General, reflecting the General Assembly's requests for programmes and targets to improve the situation, would help to reduce the number of States which were unrepresented or underrepresented. Staff members from developing countries should be appointed in proportion to the populations of those countries. His delegation wished the Secretariat to undertake studies of the Organization's staffing from those standpoints.

72. **Archbishop Migliore** (Observer for the Holy See) said that the duty of United Nations staff members was to observe the highest standards of integrity. The Organization was neither a grouping of States nor a collection of institutions, but, rather, a family of nations. If its integrity and credibility were damaged by corruption, partiality or dishonest conduct, all its Members were affected by the resulting disappointment. By providing for the establishment of an Ethics Office at the 2005 World Summit, the international community had taken an encouraging step. His delegation was pleased that the Secretary-General, in his report on the activities of the Office (A/61/274), had indicated that many staff members had availed themselves of its services, and looked forward to a further report on those activities at the sixty-second session.

73. **Mr. Berti Oliva** (Cuba) said that his delegation would like to know what next steps the Secretariat planned to take regarding the dilemma explained by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, and wondered whether the Committee would have the opportunity to consider the two documents concerned.

74. **The Chairman** said that the Committee Bureau would meet the following day to discuss the matter.

75. **Mr. Konfourou** (Mali) said that the Organization's staff were vital to implementation of its complex, changing and interdependent mandates. Without them, it would be unable to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration or the 2005 World Summit. If they were asked to give their best in those endeavours, they must also be given the opportunity to have a fulfilling career. The improvements in human resources planning, rationalization and computerization of human resources management, staff selection, mobility and training were promising. The Organization must continue to uphold high standards of ethics, performance, accountability, management and respect for diversity.

76. Equitable geographical distribution, particularly at senior management levels, was yet to be achieved. The situation must be tackled urgently in order to preserve the multinational character of the Organization. While the Galaxy system had made vacancy announcements more transparent and facilitated job applications, it was complicated to use and was too slow to produce results. The Organization must invest in its existing and future human capital in order to meet the changing needs of its Members.

Agenda item 133: Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (*continued*) (A/C.5/61/L.5)

Draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.5: Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi

77. **Ms. Pollard** (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that, on the basis of the mission's projected expenditure for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007, the General Assembly was invited to appropriate to the Special Account for the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) an amount of $128,536,700, which was $16,085,100 less than the total originally indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the budget for the mission (A/61/309).

78. *Draft resolution A/C.5/61/L.5 was adopted.*

79. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the staff of ONUB must be commended for their efforts and progress, thanks to which the General Assembly was able to discuss drawdown and the prospect of conversion into an integrated special political mission in early 2007. The African Group believed that the Committee's handling of mission financing should be guided by the cardinal principle that, as the mandate and environment of each mission were unique, mission budgets should reflect those special characteristics. However, the Committee had faced the problem of having too little time for consideration of the ONUB budget; steps must be taken to avoid a repetition of such difficulties. The Group also wished to emphasize that drawdown of missions must be gradual and care must be taken to preserve the gains made. The best practices derived from the successful drawdown of other missions such as the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) must be taken into account. Finally, the Group looked forward to more detailed information on the mission in subsequent performance reports.

80. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa) said that the decisions of the General Assembly on ONUB must aim to ensure that the mission could complete its mandate effectively, providing sufficient resources and staff for its drawdown, transition from a peacekeeping mission to a special political mission, and administrative liquidation. Her delegation was consequently concerned at the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, explained at the Committee's 5th meeting (see A/C.5/61/SR.5), for a prorated reduction in resource requirements based on financial performance in 2005/06, as a reduction would have serious consequences for the scheduled drawdown of troops and for the effectiveness of the mission. It was also concerned at the Advisory Committee's interpretation of the performance figures for that period, which must not be considered anything more than provisional until final information was provided in May 2007. Only then would the Committee be able to account for the differences between actual and budgeted spending patterns. The unpredictable and unique nature of each peacekeeping operation must be taken into account, as expenditure variations often occurred as a result of the different challenges and environments in which missions operated.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/C.5/61/SR.13

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Chairman: Mr. Yousfi ..... (Algeria)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Saha

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Renovation to the residence of the Secretary-General: revised estimates to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

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06-59372 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 117: Programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (*continued*)

Renovation to the residence of the Secretary-General: revised estimates to the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (A/61/377 and A/61/523)

1. **Ms. Nowlan** (Programme Planning and Budget Division, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts) said that, as indicated in paragraphs 4 to 10 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/377), the Secretary-General's residence was in need of major renovation. Paragraphs 11 to 13 explained that the ageing of the building and the obsolescence of its mechanical, plumbing, heating and cooling systems had given rise to a situation in which regular maintenance and emergency repairs were no longer sufficient. The proposed renovation would include the replacement of critical equipment systems, the refurbishment of public areas used to entertain high-level dignitaries and Heads of State and the upgrading of security installations. The completion of the current Secretary-General's tenure provided an opportunity to begin the project, which was scheduled for implementation over a period of nine months, with construction ending in September 2007. The General Assembly was invited to approve the renovation, to authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments of up to $4,490,400 under sections 1 and 32 of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 and to request the Secretary-General to report on the expenditure in the context of the second performance report for 2006-2007.

2. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/61/523), said that, in keeping with proper budget procedure, the proposal to renovate the Secretary-General's residence should have been submitted as part of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 rather than as a revised estimate in the middle of the biennium.

3. The renovation should be carried out in strict compliance with established procedures, including open bidding. To avoid cost escalation, the time schedule for the works should be adhered to. Every effort should be made to successfully conclude negotiations with the Sutton Place Association in order to ensure that all necessary security improvements could be made. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be authorized to enter into commitments up to the maximum amount proposed, but trusted that the sums concerned would be absorbed within the approved appropriations under sections 1 and 32 of the programme budget for the current biennium.

4. **Ms. Pehrman** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, said that, while the European Union considered renovation of the Secretary-General's residence to be necessary, it shared the concerns of the Advisory Committee. It wondered what options and solutions had been explored and how the cost estimates had been calculated, and expected that steps would be taken to ensure transparency and accountability. All necessary security improvements, including upgrading to the minimum operating security standards, should be implemented.

5. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the renovation of the Secretary-General's residence should have been addressed sooner, to avoid cost escalation and to ensure that the Secretary-General and his family could be accommodated in a safe and comfortable environment. The Group supported the proposal for additional resources to finance the project. The Department of Safety and Security should explain why security gaps had not yet been addressed, and the Advisory Committee should clarify the reasoning behind paragraph 13 of its report (A/61/523), as the stipulation that additional resource requirements should be absorbed within existing appropriations should not delay alterations, improvements and maintenance which the General Assembly had already approved under section 32 of the programme budget for the current biennium. Such delays could cause further cost escalation in the future. The Group agreed with the Advisory Committee that the envisaged time schedule must be adhered to and that the project should be implemented in a transparent and accountable manner.

6. **Ms. Shah** (United States of America) said that the condition of the Secretary-General's residence, as described in the relevant reports, was a matter of concern. Her delegation assumed that the proposed renovations would correct the existing deficiencies and conform to current New York City codes. It agreed with the comments of the Advisory Committee regarding the timing of the request for funds, and wondered why the proposal had not been part of the proposed programme budget for the biennium, particularly in the light of the safety concerns expressed. It also agreed with the Advisory Committee that delays should be avoided and that the cost of the renovation should be met from within existing resources under sections 1 and 32 of the programme budget.

7. **Ms. Kuroda** (Japan) said that her delegation, while supporting the proposal to renovate the Secretary-General's residence, shared the Advisory Committee's view that the request for funds should have been included in the proposed programme budget for the current biennium. It wondered why the Secretariat had delayed the submission of such a request if the condition of the building had been known for so long. The time schedule for the works should be adhered to strictly in order to avoid unnecessary cost escalation, and the estimated requirements for the project should be fully absorbed within the existing appropriations under sections 1 and 32 of the programme budget. The Committee would review the matter in the context of the second performance report for the biennium.

8. **Mr. Saha** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), responding to the request for clarification of paragraph 13 of the Advisory Committee's report, said that the Advisory Committee had taken account of two factors. First, the Organization was in the first year of the biennial budget. Second, the Committee had requested and received information on expenditure under section 32 of the programme budget up to the end of September 2006. The Advisory Committee had based its conclusions on that information, which indicated that only 29 per cent of the appropriation under section 32 had been spent. If the Committee wished to be provided with further details of the expenditure situation, it could approach the Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.